


REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED AD-A279 552 		1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
3 DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY OF REPORT DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.		5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	6b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) C	7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) NAVAL WAR COLLEGE NEWPORT, R.I. 02841		7b ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
8a NAME OF FUNDING SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	8b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
6c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		10 SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.
		TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) RISK AND DETERRENCE DURING LODGMET (U)			
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) MAJ KENNETH R. DAHL, USA			
13a. TYPE OF REPORT FINAL	13b. TIME COVERED FROM TO	14 DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 8 FEB 94	15 PAGE COUNT 27
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.			
17 COSATI CODES		18 SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	
		FORCE PROJECTION; RISK; DETERRENCE;	
19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) AS U.S. NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY SHIFTS TO A REGIONAL FOCUS AND A MILITARY BASED PREDOMINANTLY IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES, FORCE PROJECTION BECOMES EVEN MORE CRUCIAL TO ACHIEVING OUR STRATEGIC GOALS. THE BUILD-UP OF FORCES IN THE OPERATIONAL AREA AND THE DECISIVE COMBAT PHASE OF AN OPERATION ARE PRECEDED BY THE LODGMET PHASE, AND THEREBY DEPENDENT ON ITS SUCCESS. EARLY ENTRY FORCES IN THE LODGMET PHASE TYPICALLY HAVE TWO MISSIONS: ESTABLISHING AND EXPANDING THE LODGMET AREA, AND DETERRING ENEMY ACTION. OPERATIONAL COMMANDERS MUST BALANCE THE FORCE AND SEQUENCE THE DEPLOYMENT TO ACCOMPLISH THESE MISSIONS AND MINIMIZE RISK. OUR EXPERIENCE IN DESERT SHIELD TAUGHT US VALUABLE LESSONS ABOUT LODGMET OPERATIONS AND RAISED SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS. WE MUST LEARN FROM OUR SUCCESS IN DESERT SHIELD AND FULLY INTEGRATE ALL SERVICE CAPABILITIES TO ENSURE FUTURE LODGMET OPERATIONS ARE JOINT AND SUCCESSFUL.			
20 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21 ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
22a NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL CHAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT		22b TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 841-3414	22c OFFICE SYMBOL C

(Unclassified Paper)

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

Risk and Deterrence During Lodgment

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Maritime Operations.

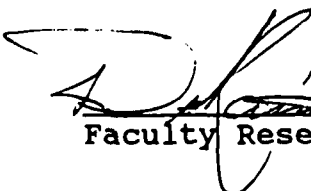
The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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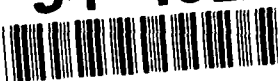
8 February 1994
(College of Naval Command and Staff, June 1994)

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Captain H.W. Clark, Chairman
Joint Military Operations Department

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Faculty Research Advisor 2/4/94
Date

94-15293



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Abstract of
RISK AND DETERRENCE DURING LODGMENT

As U.S. national military strategy shifts to a regional focus and a military based predominantly in the continental United States, force projection becomes even more crucial to achieving our strategic goals. The build-up of forces in the operational area and the decisive combat phase of an operation are preceded by the lodgment phase, and thereby dependent on its success. Early entry forces in the lodgment phase typically have two missions: establishing and expanding the lodgment area, and deterring enemy action. Operational commanders must balance the force and sequence the deployment to accomplish these missions and minimize risk. Our experience in Desert Shield taught us valuable lessons about lodgment operations and raised some important questions. We must learn from our success in Desert Shield and fully integrate all service capabilities to ensure future lodgment operations are joint and successful.

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RISK AND DETERRENCE DURING LODGMENT

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Force Projection is a fundamental element of current national military strategy. One implication of this for the operational level commander is the need for a thorough understanding of the delicate balance between risk and deterrence in the lodgment phase of an operation. A critical analysis of our recent success in the Persian Gulf, and a full appreciation of our joint military capabilities are essential to our future success.

I begin this essay with a brief theoretical examination of the strategic and operational aspects of force projection. I then use Operation Desert Shield as a case study of this theory in practice. This is followed by a brief analysis of Desert Shield. I conclude with a look toward future operations.

CHAPTER II

FORCE PROJECTION

Among the foundations and principles of the current military strategy of the United States are crisis response and power projection. Crisis response is a requirement to respond to a regional crisis rapidly to deter, and if necessary, defeat an aggressor. Power projection goes beyond crisis response to include our routine demonstration of military commitment. In this way, power projection contributes to deterrence, regional stability, and collective security.¹ Regardless, crisis response or power projection involves the introduction of military forces into an area where few, if any, forces are presently operating. This is force projection. Our worldwide forward presence has declined to the point where our forces are predominantly based in the continental United States. This disposition makes force projection crucial to our military strategy.

Joint Force Commanders (JFC) typically arrange their campaigns and operations in five phases: prehostilities, lodgment, decisive combat and stabilization, follow-through, and posthostilities. While forces may continue to deploy throughout the operation, the initial entry of forces occurs during lodgment. In combat operations this may be unopposed, or it may require forcible entry. In either case it is followed by the

expansion of lodgement areas to receive follow-on forces.² This paper will focus on the early stages of lodgment.

Since it is desirable to end all conflicts at the lowest force level possible, early entry forces serve a dual purpose. One purpose is to seize lodgments and prepare the area for follow-on echelons. This emphasizes logistics and preparation of the lodgment. It should have a substantial logistical element and only enough combat power to protect itself. In some situations, a second purpose is to demonstrate our military commitment to resolving the conflict and serve as a deterrent to further aggression. This emphasizes combat forces and it must be deployed with sufficient combat power to provide a credible defense. The disposition and capabilities of the enemy force will dictate which purpose is most important. If the mission is to establish the lodgment and act as a deterrent, the situation is extremely complex and inherently more risky. In order for the early entry forces to accomplish their mission the appropriate mix of forces and sequencing of their arrival must be determined.

There is a delicate balance between logistics and combat power during the planning and conduct of lodgment. Too much combat power and insufficient logistics will not provide for sustainment of the force. This not only limits the capabilities of the existing force, but lengthens the time between the arrival of deploying units and their employment. Too much logistics and not enough combat power risks the security of the lodgment itself. This dilemma requires a commander to balance combat

forces and logistics into an appropriate mix depending on the commander's estimate of the situation. This balance is particularly sensitive to the enemy situation. The planning process must address such critical issues as whether the entry is expected to be opposed or unopposed, whether the force will be immediately employed into action or train and acclimate to the new area of operations, and whether or not the area of operations has sufficient existing infrastructure to support a lodgment. The bottom line is that during lodgment, the force is a friendly center of gravity. Therefore, protection of the force is necessary to ensure its security.

The commander at the operational level has four basic questions to consider when planning an operation:

1. What military conditions must be produced in the operational area to achieve the strategic goal?
2. What sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition?
3. How should the resources of the joint force be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions?
4. What is the likely cost or risk to the joint force in performing that sequence of actions?³

The final question deserves special attention with regard to lodgment. Since the lodgment phase of an operation is the first action in the operational area, it must be successful for later phases to achieve the envisioned end state. If excessive risk is accepted during lodgment and the necessary military conditions

are not achieved, the entire operation fails, or is at least severely jeopardized. During the decisive combat phase risk is more acceptable since it may yield great advantage over the enemy. Furthermore, should the risk lead to failure, the setback is less dramatic in a developed area of operations than it would be in a developing lodgment area. For this reason it is logical that less risk is tolerable during lodgment than during the decisive combat phase. This is an important consideration for the Joint Force Commander.

Another consideration of risk is the possibility of the arrival of forces prompting escalation of the situation rather than deterring enemy aggression. Too little power, as perceived by the enemy, may be viewed as a temporary weakness and an opportunity to take advantage of. Too much power may be perceived as an offensive capability and the enemy may move to pre-empt this threat. This is not to say that a commander should not generate decisive power as a credible deterrence. However, at some point, from the enemy's perspective, the force ratios may reach a level way out of proportion with being simply a deterrent, and have the opposite effect.

Simply put, CONUS based forces and a regional focus requires force projection. Force projection is dependent on successful lodgment in the area of operations. Therefore, the operational commander simply cannot afford to take excessive risks during the lodgment phase.

CHAPTER III

DESERT SHIELD

Much has been written about Desert Storm, the one hundred hour ground war, the devastating air war, and even the massive build-up of forces in the region. But very little has been written about the first two weeks of Desert Shield. Given the pivotal importance of this period to the success of the campaign it warrants close examination.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait, the U.S. had a weak forward presence in the immediate area. U.S. Task Force Middle East, consisting of four frigates, one destroyer, and one command ship was operating 600 miles southeast of Kuwait protecting oil shipping lanes. Two Air Force KC-135 tankers were over the United Arab Emirates supporting an air operation.¹

While not a complete surprise to the National Command Authority, we were not prepared for action when Saddam Hussein's forces crossed the Kuwaiti border at 0200 on the 2nd of August 1990. When National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft informed President Bush of the situation he said he wanted something done right away. Scowcroft chaired a meeting of the deputies committee. While discussing available military options, the possibility of using ground forces was raised. Scowcroft felt this was too visible and would take too long. Scowcroft, with the

agreement of the others, decided to recommend a squadron of F-15's be sent to Saudi bases with their permission.²

After a few days of intensive political and diplomatic efforts the President ordered deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia on 7 August to protect our vital interests. The objectives were clearly stated:

1. Assure the security and stability of the Persian Gulf area.

2. Effect the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

3. Restore the legitimate government of Kuwait.

4. Protect the lives of American citizens abroad.³

These objectives were the basis for action by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell. General Powell testified to Congress that "Our military objectives are directly linked to these national security objectives. The first and most critical threat we had to face was that the Iraqi army might, indeed, continue into Saudi Arabia. Our initial mission, then, was to move US forces quickly into position to deter an invasion and defend Saudi territory."⁴ He continued, "The immediate problem we had was to plant the American flag in the desert of Saudi Arabia so Mr. Saddam Hussein knew if he crossed that desert, he would be in conflict with the United States of America....I can assure you..there was no question that a real threat was being posed to Saudi Arabia."⁵

General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander in Chief, Central Command felt that the key military action at this point was to put ground forces "in harm's way," to show resolve and deter further aggression.⁶ At 0800 on 8 August the Division Ready Brigade (DRB) of the 82nd Airborne Division departed Fort Bragg, North Carolina for Saudi Arabia.⁷ Although lightly armed and thereby ill-suited for defense against an armored threat, this was one of the only forces capable of being strategically deployed to the operational area.

Other forces were also deployed to the area. The Navy's Independence Carrier Battle Group was already headed for the region and was ordered into the Gulf of Oman, arriving on 6 August. The Eisenhower Carrier Battle Group was in the Eastern Mediterranean awaiting orders to pass through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea. Combined, the two carriers had over 100 fighter and attack aircraft. On 7 August, F-15C Eagle fighters from the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia began to deploy to Saudi air bases. The Maritime Prepositioning Ships at Diego Garcia began moving toward Saudi Arabia to be married up with a Marine Expeditionary Brigade being flown in from the U.S.

The clearly stated mission was to defend Saudi Arabia. However, as stated by Douglas Craft of the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute,

"in the absence of sufficient warning to deploy a defensive force, a force capable of deterring further aggression was necessary to gain time to deploy the main force. Additionally, the deterrent force had to contain enough combat power to sufficiently reduce any

attacking force by attrition and prevent Iraqi force regeneration until the main coalition defensive force could be deployed."⁸

To ensure the initial ground forces had as much combat power as possible, Lieutenant General Gary Luck, Commander of XVIII Airborne Corps deviated from established plans and put the division's aviation brigade early in the sequence of deployment. He also reinforced the DRB with a battery of Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS). The 82nd anti-tank capability was enhanced with additional TOW weapons systems. These decisions had tremendous impact on future operations. As Craft points out,

" allocating early sorties exclusively to combat forces delayed the development of the theater support structure demanded for future operations. As a result, the decision limited the options of the overall operational development of the theater because it tied the organization to host nation sources and strategic lines of communication."⁹

On board the first aircraft from Fort Bragg to arrive in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia was Brigadier General Edison Scholes, the XVIII Airborne Corps Chief of Staff. During the early days of lodgment, BG Scholes would revise his plan of defense with every arriving aircraft. Rather than look at the day-to-day build-up of forces, it is sufficiently instructive to look at a snapshot of the situation ten days into the deployment. At this point the ground force consisted of 4,185 troops of the 82nd, 15 Apache attack helicopters, 23 other helicopters, 19 Sheridan light tanks, 56 TOW anti-tank systems, 20 Stinger teams, 3 Vulcans, 20 105mm howitzers, and 3 MLRS launchers.¹⁰ The Air Force had

deployed B52G bombers as well as a squadron of C130's for intra-theater lift requirements.¹¹

Exact accounts of what the Iraqi Army had in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO) vary but their forces approximated nearly 1,000 tanks and 30,000 soldiers. In addition, Saddam Hussein was reinforcing the KTO daily with forces deployed along the Saudi border. The Iraqi Air Force contained more than 500 combat aircraft.¹² Iraq's capability to attack or defend was clear and significant. However, their intentions were not clear. At first, the units deployed along the Saudi border showed no signs of downloading their supplies, digging in and establishing a defensive posture. Armored elements of the Iraqi 3d Corps from Basrah occupied assembly areas near the Iraqi border giving the impression of a second echelon for a Republican Guard advance into Saudi Arabia. American military intelligence analysts had to conclude that Iraq was certainly capable of continuing the attack.¹³

John M. Collins, Senior Specialist in National Defense at the Congressional Research Service spelled out several options available to Iraq early in the crisis. He believes that Saddam Hussein initially may have intended to invade Saudi Arabia in order to seize control of that country's oil industry. Either alternatively or in conjunction with an invasion he might bombard allied forces from his present positions using aircraft and missiles. U.S. forces on the ground possessed no credible defense

against a missile strike. Use of chemical weapons was also a possibility.¹⁴

In the Final Report to Congress, this early period during the first few weeks of Desert Shield is referred to as the "vulnerability window." Despite the fact that it has received little attention by those who have written about the Persian Gulf Conflict many leaders and analysts were aware of the tremendous risk at the time. The following is a sampling of some of their observations:

COL Harry Summers Jr. (RET.), "the U.S buildup was code-named Desert Shield to emphasize that it shielded Saudi Arabia from further attack. And for awhile it was a thin shield indeed. The Navy carriers on station and the Air Force's 1st Tactical Fighter Wing could defend Saudi airspace but their offensive-strike capability was limited. While the 82nd Airborne Division had been airlifted into place to show the flag, they were no match for the Iraqi armored divisions that had just overrun Kuwait and were now poised on the Kuwait-Saudi border. This was a precarious period for the United States."¹⁵

Vice Admiral Francis Donovan, chief of Military Sealift Command, "We haven't done anything like this for a long, long time, going back to 1950 and the insertion of the first Marine division into Korea at Inchon. This is in the same league, if not bigger. The stakes are very, very high."¹⁶

Lieutenant General John J. Yeosock, CENTCOM Army Component Commander said there was a period of time in early August that he thought he might be fighting Iraq "with my penknife."¹⁷

General Powell testified in Congress in September, 1990 "As time passes, and as our build-up continues, we believe we are well on the way to having a confidence level that we will be able to successfully accomplish the mission given us by the President to defend Saudi Arabia and the other nations in the region from Iraqi aggression. But we are not there yet..."¹⁸ (italics added)

While wargaming on the evening news with Tom Brokaw, Colonel Summers was role playing the multinational forces and his opponent Colonel William Taylor was playing the role of Saddam Hussein. Colonel Taylor's first move:

"Now is the time to strike. The Americans have only put in a tripwire. I'm prepared to take on that tripwire because I can defeat it now. I'll move south with armored forces led by about 500 of my best T-72 tanks. I'll have a spearhead that moves quickly. I can cut through the 82nd Airborne and the Saudi Forces like butter. They offer no resistance. In 2 1/2 days I'll be down at the Oman border. I will hold Saudi Arabia. The first time I run into significant resistance, I will use chemical weapons, as I've done against the Iranians. It worked very well."¹⁹

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING FROM OUR SUCCESS

As it turned out the lodgment phase of Desert Shield was a tremendous success. Saddam Hussein first paused, then dug in to establish a fortress-like defense. This allowed for the massive build-up of forces that defended Saudi Arabia and later drove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. A few specific points that contributed to this success are worth mentioning. The initial U.S. response to the invasion of Kuwait was the strategic mobility of an impressive number of forces from all the services. In just a few days, the Army readied and deployed the DRB, the Marines began moving the MPS from Diego Garcia, the Navy sent their two closest carriers, and the Air Force deployed a fighter squadron. Although the attack was unexpected, our crisis response was a surprise to the Iraqi's.

The rapid arrival of the fighter squadron with their advanced aircraft allowed for protection of the small ground force so vulnerable to Iraqi air attack. When integrated with the Saudi's own Air Force they quickly established a balance of power in the air. LTG Luck's decision to bring MLRS and Army Aviation assets early in the deployment provided some deep fire capability for defence and protection.

The early arrival of a small contingent of logistics personnel allowed for coordination with the Saudi's for host nation support. The U.S. did a remarkable job of taking full

advantage of the existing infrastructure and resources, minimizing the negative aspects of deploying so little sustainment.

If we are to learn all we can from our experience in Desert Shield, our critical analysis must raise a number of important questions. My point here is not to criticize the decisions made by commanders at the time. Nor will I attempt to provide all the answers. It has already been mentioned what a tremendous success the operation was. I ask these questions in hope that they are asked during the planning phase of future operations.

Did we make maximum use of our joint resources and integrate them into a joint operation plan? The Air Force, for instance, deployed all fighters at first. This was effective in establishing control of the air, but provided limited attack capability and no close air support for ground troops. It was not until late August that a significant number of close air support aircraft were available to the ground force commander. Despite the over 100 aircraft on the two carriers, there is little evidence to indicate this deep strike capability was incorporated into the plan to deter and defend against the overwhelming number of Iraqi forces.

The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, a mechanized air-ground task force was given a mission independent of the ground forces in the lodgment area. With their medium-sized force, and relatively greater anti-armor capability, they may have been useful in securing the lodgment area and protecting the light

ground forces. If the resources of all the services were integrated into the plan for the lodgment, the requirement for deploying MLRS and army aviation assets would not have been so urgent. This would have allowed for a different mix of early entry forces and a balance more favorable to the receipt of follow-on forces and their sustainment. In his operational analysis of the war Craft addresses this issue quite thoroughly:

"We must be cautious about these decisions in the future. Successful support of early U.S. policy and strategy in the region by early deployment priority of light combat forces at the expense of an integrated support may provide planners with a false sense of security for future contingency operations. First, planners must recognize that light forces are not as light as advertised when facing a modern, armored threat. This leads to significantly underestimating already critical strategic lift requirements within a system that does not have adequate resources to meet the planned theater requirements. Second, there are few places in the world that possess the infrastructure and wealth to provide the level of host nation support provided by the Gulf states...one should recall the lessons of previous contingency operations where the intent of the military operation shifted, just as the Persian Gulf contingency operation shifted from defense of the Saudi Arabian peninsula to the ejection of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The early decisions on the development of the theater support structure establish boundaries on flexibility for future operations. Failure to recognize the demands of the theater and the support of the forces for the operations envisioned in the theater greatly increases the risk to the mission accomplishment and the welfare of the contingency force."¹

A similar argument can be made with respect to deploying light forces against a heavy enemy force. *Did we take excessive risk during the lodgment phase by deploying light ground forces to act as an immediate deterrent?* It is true that you can't always have the force you would like, but must sometimes settle

for what is available. But is it wise to employ a highly vulnerable force simply because they are the only ones who have the strategic mobility to rapidly deploy? Had the situation developed differently, and the Iraqi's attacked, we might have lost not only a tactical battle and the first phase of an operation, but a strategic asset. The deployment of light ground forces could have been delayed until sufficient naval and air power were available in the area to provide firepower and protection. This would also allow time for the Marine MPS to be in a position where their capabilities can be better integrated into the lodgment plan.

Was it necessary to plant the flag, and put soldiers in harm's way to deter further Iraqi aggression? There were other resources available to communicate to Saddam Hussein that the cost of continuing the attack would be high. This might have been accomplished with air sorties from the carriers, or the arrival of strategic bombers in the area of operations. Perhaps the use of electronic warfare or other soft measures might have sufficiently demonstrated our capabilities and determined support for Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER V

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Force projection will continue to be a military instrument that serves a policy of deterrence. Therefore, it is crucial that we fully understand deterrence and lodgment. First of all, this requires that we take the perspective of our adversary. For it is not important whether we see our actions as a deterrent, but only that they are perceived so by those whose behavior we wish to influence. While we may not be impressed with the presence of an LHA off our coast, a country with little or no navy may be sufficiently coerced.

Second, it is important that all levels of leadership agree on the true nature of the deterrence. It is understood that we are trying to influence the decision-making of our enemy by convincing them that their actions will be very costly. But this can take two forms. One way is to generate decisive combat power so the enemy concludes that they will suffer very heavy, and unacceptable losses. This is largely a military form and requires mass. The other way is to put American service members in a position where further action by the enemy would result in U.S. casualties. It is assumed that these casualties would solidify U.S. government and public support for full-scale military action. This form of deterrence is largely political. We must take care to ensure the operational level commander is

clear which form he is to execute, so that he may tailor his force and deployment accordingly.

Future operations will be joint. Each of the services has created an improved crisis response force since the Gulf War. For instance the Air Force has the 23rd Composite Wing with lift, close air support, and fighter aircraft co-located with the XVIII Airborne Corps. In addition to those forces allocated to the warfighting Commanders In Chief (CINC's) they can draw liberally from the assets of supporting CINC's to include CONUS based forces. It is important that all the resources of the joint community be considered in planning all phases of an operation. Understanding the capabilities and limitations of all the services will help us to overcome our own service biases.

Military historians and analysts often comment that when nations go to war they tend to fight the same way the fought the last war. Given our experiences with "Urgent Fury" in Grenada, and "Just Cause" in Panama, this may have had some impact on the early stages of Desert Shield. It is also often said that nations learn more from wars that they lost rather than wars that they won. If there is any truth to these notions we are now susceptible to being biased by both our experience and our success in the Gulf. In this regard I point out two aspects of our success that we should particularly guard ourselves against. One is our emphasis on the quick win, and the other is our correctly determining Saddam's intentions.

The brevity of "Urgent Fury" and "Just Cause" have shaped our military thinking, and strategic culture to expect the rapid victory. While this is certainly desirable it may not always be possible. The pressure to meet the military goals quickly can inhibit the planning process by limiting the range of options considered, the mix of forces deployed, and the sequence of their deployment. It is likely that "Desert Shield" will influence our military thinking and strategic culture in a similar fashion. This can cause us to "unwittingly include exploitable vulnerabilities in the planning process."¹ We are not the only ones who study our military history and analyze our operations. Our potential adversaries in the world are also watching closely and preparing themselves to meet our challenge should we attempt to repeat our successes too exactly.

With regard to correctly assessing Saddam's intentions in early August 1990, we should be very careful that we don't become over confident in our ability to do so. When he massed his troops on the Saudi border we guessed that his intentions were to defend and not attack. Before long, intelligence reports began to support this assertion. Yet Saddam always retained the capability of attacking. We must remember that it is the enemies capabilities, and not his intentions, that we consider when developing courses of action. Despite some very clear intelligence that Iraq was preparing to invade Kuwait, we failed to believe he would do it. We could have been just as wrong about his attacking Saudi Arabia in early August.

If, in the future, we anticipate too much we open ourselves up to operational deception. Our enemy might be thinking that all they need to do to influence our decision making is to show a defensive posture. If we then judge this to be their intention and plan and execute accordingly, we become vulnerable to attack. Such an attack could surrender the initiative, demoralize our military and fracture public support. It is important that we not allow our victory in the Gulf to blind us to enemy capabilities and thereby fail to plan for all contingencies.

As the military draws down in dollars and personnel, the services compete to maintain their position in our nation's defense. Let us not let this bias our thinking at the operational level to the point at which we fail to integrate the resources of all services in our plans and operations. And let us not let our terrific success in the Desert Shield and Desert Storm keep us from learning some important lessons and asking some important questions.

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